

Testimony of John C. Geragosian Nominee for State Auditor

Good afternoon Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, Senator Fasano, Representative Piscopo and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I'm pleased to be here before you today as a nominee to serve as State Auditor in the Office of Auditor of Public Accounts. I especially want to thank Senate President Donald Williams and House Speaker Christopher Donovan for their support and confidence in me to assume this position.

I've been serving as an interim State Auditor since January 5th. In those two short weeks in this new position, I have been working with Commissioner Robert Ward to set our priorities and goals for the office. Having said that, I have to tell you how difficult it was for me to leave the legislature. The last 16 years have been the greatest time in my life. I've met some of my best friends during my service in the legislature. We've learned together, laughed together, and have together shared many milestones, both happy and sad, that families do. I even had the opportunity to meet my wife at the Capitol. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of my former colleagues and the legislative staff, both partisan and non-partisan, for all of their help and guidance. I also want to thank the people of New Britain and Newington for all of their support throughout the years.

I would also like to thank our predecessors, Robert Jaekle and Kevin Johnston for leaving us an office in such good condition. I can happily say, the Auditor's office is fully staffed, on-budget and performing its statutory duties. I also want to thank Mr. Jaekle and Mr. Johnston for their help and guidance as we transitioned into their positions.

I'm happy to again have the opportunity to work with Robert Ward. Bob is a gentleman who is liked and well-respected by everyone in state government. I'm pleased to report we've been working very well together and share many of the same goals.

The office of Auditor of Public Accounts has broad and important powers and duties. Among them are:

- Auditing the books and accounts of each officer, department, commission, board and court in state government, including quasi-public bodies;
- Performing the Statewide Single Audit of Federal Programs in accordance with the Federal Single Audit Act;
- Determining whether the State's resources are properly safeguarded;
- Determining whether such resources are properly and prudently used;

- Determining an audited agency's compliance with legal requirements;
- Evaluating a program's results, including consideration of costs and benefits;
- Investigating whistle blower matters.

Besides my service on other legislative committees in the General Assembly, my sixteen years of service on the Appropriations Committee, the past two as co-chair, provided me with invaluable knowledge of the state budget and the fiscal reality Connecticut faces today. I am intimately familiar with each budget line item. The final push for fully implementing results-based accountability into our budget process happened on my watch, as it were, and I welcome the opportunity to evaluate its findings from a different chair. I would pose to you that there is no more important time in Connecticut's history for the Auditors of Public Accounts to discharge their responsibility, and it is a responsibility for which I believe I am well-qualified.

Even with just a few days on the job, there are a few major areas I'd like to see the office change going forward. The first would be taking advantage of technology for greater efficiency and lowering costs. The Auditor's Office, like other state agencies, is going through a transition of the degree of technology we use. I'd like to see our office become paperless, or at the very least use less paper. The Office is currently using video training, webinars, and other means of technology to help our auditors better complete the 80 hours of continuing education required of them during each two-year period. Those changes have saved the office thousands of dollars of travel and productivity costs. I'd like to continue to build on that process. I would also hope the Auditor's Office would be included in efforts to modernize state systems so we can help our auditors be more productive and less intrusive to the agencies we oversee.

Secondly, I'd like the office to return to conducting performance audits, something we've been unable to do for the last few years. To achieve this, we have to deal with a backlog of whistleblower complaints that has hampered us from doing more comprehensive performance audits. We will be meeting with the Attorney General's Office to develop a plan to reduce the backlog of these cases.

Lastly, performance auditing is especially important during difficult fiscal times. The new administration's desire to restructure state government and the legislature's desire to use results-based accountability for budgeting and programmatic evaluations lend themselves well to resuming performance auditing. This would enable the Auditor's Office to again start measuring how state programs and agencies perform and determining how well state government is serving our citizens. Performance audits provide the information decision-makers need to know where tax dollars are being used to their greatest – and least – benefit.

Thank you for this opportunity and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.